Using Presentational Aids

Introduction:

I. Attention Getter: What do you think of when you look at this picture? Do you think this person is poor? On drugs? Homeless?

II. Speaker Credibility: The picture I showed you and the questions I asked were from a former students’ persuasive speech I heard three years ago. Since then I’ve heard thousands of speeches, yet I still remember hers.

III. Listener Relevance Link: Research shows that audiences typically remember about 25% of a speech after two days of hearing it; however, adding presentational aids increases our retention to over 50% and can make your speech more memorable.

IV. Thesis: Today I’d like to explain how to effectively construct and display presentational aids.

V. Preview: First, I’ll describe the types of presentational aids, then display methods, and finally, guidelines to follow.

Body:

I. To begin, presentational aids are visual, audio, or audiovisual materials used to enhance your audience’s understanding of the topic. They can also help your audience retain important information, increase your persuasive appeal, organize ideas, and help you feel less anxious (Verderber, Verderber & Sellnow, 2008).

A. One type of presentational aids is an object. Besides dramatizing your verbal message, actual objects appeal to diverse learning styles.

   1. One of the reasons I have students deliver the artifact speech first is because it requires them to use an object.
a. Students bring a wide variety of inanimate objects to class: photo albums, books, jewelry, keys, phones, i-pods, computers, sports equipment, musical instruments, quilts, stuffed animals, and many others.

b. I’ve also witnessed students use objects to set the mood for a speech. For example, for a speech persuading us to use relaxation techniques in our daily lives, a student dimmed the lights, opened bottles of scented oils, and had relaxing music playing softly in the background.

2. Students can also use animate objects as presentational aids.

   a. You can be a visual aid through your movement or through your attire.

      i. One student wore the outfit he had received for Eid al-Fitr to inform our audience about this Muslim holiday.

      ii. Another online student physically showed her audience of 4-H members how to groom a horse for the fair.

   b. In addition to the horse, other animals have been used, though they can be distracting.

      i. I once had a student bring her 8 foot boa constrictor to class. She placed it on the table while she taught us about the habitats and diet of the snake. It was effective…but gross!

      ii. One of the most nervous students I’ve ever had brought his dog to calm him down while he delivered his informative speech about characteristics of an Akita.

B. If you can’t afford or find the actual object, or if it’s too big or impractical, another type of presentational aid is a model or scaled-down version. Since he couldn’t bring his
boss’s $250,000 custom combine to class, one student brought in the toy model to explain how it works.

C. A third type of presentational aid is photographs, which can serve as visual reinforcement for your verbal message.

D. Drawings and diagrams, other types of aids, are easy to prepare and can help clarify your topic, such as this diagram showing acupressure points.

E. Next, maps can help orient and focus the audience, like this map of the BWCA.

F. Finally, graphs and charts are particularly helpful when explaining facts, relationships, and statistics.

   1. Graphs, according to O’Hair, Stewart & Rubenstein in their 2010 text, “represent numerical data in visual form,” illustrating relationships and demonstrating trends (p.304). You can create line graphs, bar graphs, pie graphs, or pictograms.

   2. Charts, on the other hand, can organize and simplify the information.

      a. This is similar to a flowchart a student used to explain the positions on a football team.

      b. Organizational charts identify structure and interrelationships (2010).

Transition: Once you’ve decided on the type of presentational aid you’d like to use, you’ll next need to decide how to display them.

II. You can display your presentational aids using non-electronic or electronic means.

   A. Non-electronic ways take less time to prepare but may be perceived as less credible.

      1. Writing on a chalkboard or using a flip chart takes no preparation time, though it does take up time during the speech, and they can be ineffective, even decreasing your credibility.

         a. The audience may think you are unprepared.
b. You have to turn your back to the audience.

c. Your handwriting may be hard to read/understand.

2. Although posters would have been prepared before the speech, they can also reduce credibility if they’re cluttered, sloppy or too small for the audience to see.

3. Hand outs can help your audience retain important information, but avoid passing them out before or during your speech.

B. Electronic ways to display visual aids can enhance your credibility and persuasive appeal if they look professional; however, they too must be used correctly. It’s also important to have a back-up plan when using technology.

1. Audio aids can be displayed using CDs or the Internet. For instance, you could play an excerpt from a speech, lyrics from a song, or sounds, such as music of the humpback whale.

2. Visual aids, such as pictures, graphs, maps, and charts, can be displayed using a slide projector, overhead projector, document camera, or presentational software, such as power point.
   a. Overhead projectors can still be an effective way to enlarge documents if you have access to the projector and transparencies.
   b. Document cameras have replaced many of the overhead projectors that once appeared in most college classrooms.
   c. They share many of the same features, such as being able to zoom in on a document or write on it, without needing to make it into a transparency.

3. Audio-visual aids combine sight and sound, such as clips from a movie, TV show or from the Internet, which are usually connected from the computer, DVD or VHS to an LCD projector.
4. There are several computer software programs to help you design a presentation, but PowerPoint has become a popular choice.
   a. Because you can incorporate or embed all of your aids into Power Point, it can give your speech a more polished look...if used correctly.
   b. PowerPoint, as noted in a 2007 article from the *Communication Education Journal*, is designed to accompany speech and can help a speaker communicate more effectively (Stoner, 2007).

Transition: In order for any presentational aids to be effective, there are some basic rules to follow when choosing which ones and how to use them.

III. These guidelines can be applied to most of the types of presentational aids we’ve discussed, especially PowerPoint.

   A. The first rule is that presentational aids are used to enhance, not replace, communication. Jafee, in *Public Speaking: Concepts and Skills for a Diverse Society*, warns speakers not to use a presentational aid unless it has a purpose (2010).

   1. We’ve probably all seen speakers who have their entire lecture or speech on power point, but too many aids can be distracting or make the audience feel they don’t have to listen.

   2. However, we live in a visual society, so once you’ve written your outline, look for places where an aid would help your audience understand the information better, add variety, or emphasize or reinforce main ideas (2010).

      a. In his 2007 article, Stoner recommends “chunking” ideas within the slides to make them more meaningful.

      b. Further, your slides can divide and separate your ideas, holding them together almost like breadcrumbs used to go between web pages (2007).
c. For example, by breaking down the sub-points of electronic displays, I’m giving you breadcrumbs to help you remember the different ways to display electronic presentational aids.

3. That doesn’t mean that you should include all of your sub-points into power point slides. A standard guideline, says Sellnow (2005), is to limit your presentational aids so you are using no more than one aid for every two minutes of the speech.
   a. Sellnow also reports that aids shouldn’t take more than 15-20% of your speech (2005).
   b. In a 4-6 minute speech, then, you should use no more than 2-3 aids, which take up less than one minute of the overall speech.

B. A second guideline is that presentational aids can add to your credibility UNLESS they don’t communicate your ideas clearly.

   1. The audience should be able to easily understand your aid in 6 seconds or less.
   2. In order to do that, you must make sure the aid is large enough for everyone in the room to see, no matter if you’re using power point or a poster.
      a. Headings should be 48 point type and subheadings can be smaller.
      b. Avoid using a point type smaller than 30.
   3. Making your aids easy to understand also includes keeping them simple.
      a. Use a simple font consistently.
      b. Use a combination of upper and lower case type and check your spelling.
      c. Use key words, not full sentences and limit the amount of info so it doesn’t take up the whole line.
      d. Skip the wizardry, especially with ppt. Don’t fly or swirl things around or add graphics that clutter.
4. Color is another area to consider.
   a. Use the same background color for all of your aids.
   b. Limit the amount of color you use to 2 or 3 and use bold, bright colors to emphasize important points (O’Hair, Stewart & Rubenstein, 2010).
   c. Avoid certain colors.
      i. People who are color-blind have a hard time seeing red and green together (Sellnow, 2005).
      ii. Use colors and hues from the same family that contrast rather than clash with the background (O’Hair, Stewart & Rubenstein, 2010).

5. Let’s review some of the basic rules we’ve discussed so far.
   a. Use 4 to 6 lines of type.
   b. Don’t use the entire line of text.
   c. Use phrases rather than sentences
   d. Combine upper and lowercase type.
   e. Use simple typeface.
   f. Limit your use of color.

6. Now let’s review those same rules when they’ve violated the rules. Which of these slides can you understand in 6 seconds or less?

C. Finally, here are five practical suggestions for using presentational aids from Verderber, et al (2008).

1. First, practice using aid beforehand.
   a. I’ve actually seen students forget to advance their power point slides, so write reminders on your note cards so you remember to use them.
b. Using presentational aids add to your overall time, so you’ll need to time your speech using the aids, so you know you’re within the proper timeframe.

2. Next, position aid before speech.
   a. Make sure everyone in the room can see it.
   b. Make sure you have them all and they’re in the right order.
   c. Check technology before the audience comes in the room.
      i. Make sure you know how to use everything and that it’s all working.
      ii. Put in your flash drive, DVD or CD.
      iii. Cue up excerpts so they’re ready to go.
      iv. Locate lights/dimmer and volume knobs if you intend to use them.
      v. Have a back up plan.

3. Third, reveal and conceal aid appropriately.
   a. Don’t have it out until you’re going to use it.
   b. Cover it up or put it away when you’re done.
   c. Use blanks in power point rather than turning the projector on and off.

4. Fourth, explain and Integrate aid.
   a. Refer to each visual aid while you explain it.

5. Finally, talk to your audience, not the aid.
   a. Refer to the aid by gesturing, but don’t turn your back to the audience…Ever.
   b. Glance toward them from time to time to make sure they coincide with what you’re saying (2008).
Conclusion:

I. **Thesis Restatement:** Today I explained how to effectively construct and display presentational aids.

II. **Summary:** I described the types of presentational aids, methods to display them, and guidelines to follow.

III. **Clincher:** While you may not remember this picture of the homeless man as long as I have, I hope the information I have shown and explained to you today will help you leave a lasting impression on your audience.

References


